IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please delete the word "SPECIFICATION" from the top of page 1, where it appears above the title.

Please amend paragraphs [002, [003], [004], [005], [006], [009], [010] [011], [020], [022], [023], [024], [030], [032], [043], [046], [047], [049], [052] [056], and [066] as shown below, in which deleted terms are shown with strikethrough and added terms are shown with underscoring.

Paragraph [002]

Description of ~~the Related~~ Background Art

A gear case, forming a lower part of a marine propulsion machine, defines a gear chamber therein for housing a bevel gear mechanism, used for transmitting power ~~form~~ from a drive shaft to a propeller shaft. A drive shaft receiving bore extends downwardly from ~~the~~ an upper end wall of the gear case, and the gear chamber is connected to the lower end of the drive shaft receiving bore. The drive shaft, extended through the drive shaft receiving bore, is supported for rotation in a bearing. Sufficient lubricating oil is contained in the gear chamber and the drive shaft receiving bore to lubricate the bevel gear mechanism placed in the gear chamber, and also to lubricate the bearing disposed in the drive shaft receiving bore ~~communicating with the gear chamber~~.

Paragraph [003]

A gear case of this general kind for a marine propulsion machine, disclosed in JP 8-34394 A, has a drive shaft receiving bore ~~having~~ with an open upper end covered with the pump case of a water pump, to seal the drive shaft receiving bore and a gear chamber in a liquid-tight fashion.

Paragraph [004]

In the gear case disclosed in JP 8-34394 A, a bearing is held between ~~the~~ a flange of a drive shaft[[,]] and the gear case, but ~~and~~ is not fastened to the gear case. The bearing is held in

place by gravity, and also by a downward thrust acting on a bevel gear included in a bevel gear mechanism. Since the bearing is not restrained from upward movement, it is possible that the bearing moves vertically together with the drive shaft.

Paragraph [005]

The present invention has been made in view of such a problem as described above, and it is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a simple drive shaft support structure incorporated into a gear case for a marine propulsion machine, capable of sealing a gear chamber defined by the gear case in a liquid-tight fashion. It is another object of the present invention to provide a drive shaft support structure capable ~~and~~ of fixedly holding a bearing in the gear case to restrain a drive shaft from vertical movement therein.

Paragraph [006]

To achieve the above object, the present invention provides a drive shaft support structure for a marine propulsion machine having a gear case forming a lower part thereof, in which the marine propulsion machine ~~and~~ is provided with a vertical drive shaft receiving bore and a gear chamber connected to the lower end of the drive shaft receiving bore, and receiving a bevel gear mechanism for transmitting power from a drive shaft, supported in the drive shaft receiving bore for rotation in a bearing fixedly held in the drive shaft receiving bore, to a propeller shaft. ~~including:~~ The drive shaft support structure according to a first aspect of the present invention includes a bearing-fastening member for holding the bearing in the drive shaft receiving bore so that the bearing is ~~longitudinally immovable~~ substantially vertically fixed in place in the drive shaft receiving bore; and a covering member penetrated by the drive shaft, wherein the covering member is disposed above the bearing-fastening member, and ~~closing the open~~ closes an upper end of the drive shaft receiving bore in a liquid-tight fashion.

Paragraph [009]

Preferably, the gear case is provided in a part of the drive shaft receiving bore with an internal thread, the bearing-fastening member is provided with an external thread for mating with the internal thread of the gear case, and the bearing-fastening member is screwed in the part provided ~~with~~ in the internal threaded portion of the drive shaft receiving bore, to hold the

bearing fixedly in the drive shaft receiving bore. Thus, the bearing-fastening member can be simply and easily attached to the gear case.

Paragraph [010]

Preferably, a part of the drive shaft receiving bore extending below the internal thread is reduced to form a shoulder, the ~~bearings are~~ bearing is seated on the shoulder, and the bearing-fastening member is screwed in the part provided with the internal thread of the drive shaft receiving bore) so as to press the bearing[[s]] against the shoulder, in order to hold the bearing[[s]] between the bearing-fastening member and the shoulder.

Paragraph [011]

Preferably, a part of the drive shaft receiving bore between the internal thread and the shoulder is tapered downwardly to form a tapered bearing part, the bearing has a tapered circumference tapering downwardly, and the bearing is held in place in the drive shaft receiving bore with the tapered circumferences thereof in close contact with the tapered surface of the tapered bearing part of the drive shaft receiving bore. Thus, the bearing is held securely in the tapered bearing part.

Paragraph [020]

Fig. 1 is a side elevational view of an outboard engine including a gear case provided with a drive shaft support structure in a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Paragraph [022]

Fig. 3 is a sectional detail view of a lower portion of the gear case shown in Fig. 1;

Paragraph [023]

Fig. 4 is a top view of the lower gear case portion shown in Fig. 3;

Paragraph [024]

Fig. 5 is a rear view of the lower gear case portion shown in Fig. 3;

Paragraph [030]

Fig. 11 is a sectional view of an upper essential part of the gear case shown in Fig. 2 ~~3~~;

Paragraph [032]

Fig. 13 is a rear plan view of ~~a rear view of~~ a propeller shaft support member;

Paragraph [043]

An engine cover 13a covers at least an upper half part of the internal combustion engine 11. The engine body 10a has an under cover 13b covering a lower half part of the internal combustion engine 11. The engine body 10a defines the appearance of the outboard engine 10.[[.]] A gear case 15 is connected to the lower end of the extension case 14 of the engine body 10a.

Paragraph [046]

A bevel gear mechanism 22 and a forward/backward selector clutch mechanism 23 are ~~built~~ housed in the gear case 15. The rotation of the substantially vertical drive shaft 21 is transmitted through the bevel gear mechanism 22 to a substantially horizontal propeller shaft 24 to rotate a screw propeller 25 mounted on the propeller shaft 24.

Paragraph [047]

An upper shift rod 26, for operating the forward/backward selector clutch mechanism 23, is supported for rotation in front of the drive shaft 21 and parallel to the latter. The upper shift rod 26 is extended through the swivel shaft [[1]]6 between the mount case 12 and the gear case 15. A lower shift rod 27, coaxially coupled with the upper shift rod 26, is inserted in the gear case 15.

Paragraph [049]

Splash guards 17a and ~~an antieviation~~ anti-cavitation plates 17b extend[[s]] sideways from the opposite side surfaces of an upper part of the gear case 15. The splash guards 17a are above the anti-cavitation plates 17b.

Paragraph [052]

The substantially vertically extending drive shaft receiving bore 15b, the gear chamber 15a joined to the lower end of the drive shaft receiving bore 15b, and the propeller shaft receiving bore 15c extended horizontally backward from the gear chamber 15a cooperate to form a substantially L-shaped hollow in the gear case 15.

Paragraph [056]

Referring to Fig. 4, the respective open upper ends of the drive shaft receiving bore 15b, the shift rod receiving bore 15d, the speed-measuring bore 15f, the suction passage 15g and the exhaust passage ~~14h~~ 15h open in the joining surface 19 represented by an area shaded with dots in Fig. 4, i.e., the upper end surface joined to the extension case 14, of the gear case 15. The open upper end of the drive shaft receiving bore 15b sinks slightly beneath the joining surface 19. The gear housing 18 of the gear case 15 has the open rear end.

Paragraph [066]

As shown in Figs. 6 and 7, the bearing fastening ring 38 has an outside circumference provided with an external thread 38a, a stellate inside surface 38b with which a tool engages, and a downward annular skirt 38c.